

## Mirror, signal, manoeuvre

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## Mirror, signal, manoeuvre

by [spagbol99](#)

### Summary

Never let it be said that Peter Parker tries to avoid his problems.

Ok, yes, say it. You'd be 100% accurate.

Peter tries to avoid Tony. Stealth, he ain't...

### Notes

Well, I promised a one-shot in celebration of reaching 100K hits and here it is.

A little slice of life post 'A Peter Parker Problem'.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Peter was getting pretty good at being stealth. Like, he hadn't even asked Bucky for lessons, it just came naturally. The Stealth Spider. Yeah, that could catch on. It must have been all those months he had to creep in through his window, keeping Spider-man secret from May.

He moved quietly through the Tower. He'd planned on just not coming – don't have to try to be stealthy if you just aren't there – cue finger guns - but May was not down for his shenanigans and threatened to make dinner if he stayed.

He slipped into the kitchen, foraging in the cupboards for yet more food. His hunger had been insatiable lately. Dr Cho had run some tests; she figured that as his body was maturing, he needed more calories and it looked like his strength was increasing too. She'd made some protein bars similar to what had been developed for Captain Rogers and later Bucky too. But they tasted like ass, hence his cupboard deep dive.

“There you are.”

The unexpected sound of Tony's voice made him jump, banging his head into the cupboard door.

“Ow.” Peter pulled away to see an amused expression on Tony's face. “FRIDAY said you were in the lab.” Peter shot his eyes to where one of the minuscule cameras was. FRIDAY was not his wingman.

“She let me know when you finally had a break from your work. Was hoping we could get a start on those driving lessons...”

Work? – ah the homework he'd said he was doing to avoid Tony.

Peter started to retreat to the doorway, keeping the kitchen island between him and Tony; snack forgotten.

“Actually, already made plans to spar with Bucky, sorry, can't change plans on an ex-assassin, value my life too much, you know how it is...”

“Dinner later at least?” Tony called out as he passed through.

“Maybe,” he called back as he scampered into the elevator.

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Bucky was actually in the gym when he got there, and it didn't take much to talk him into a sparring session. So, nothing to feel guilty for, right?

Peter landed on his back on the mat; gasping for breath as all of it had been pushed out of his lungs.

"Parker, that's five times in a row. Are you even trying?"

Peter looked up to see Bucky leaning over him; enough that a strand of hair dangled from his head.

"Totally trying."

"Uh-huh," Bucky said, making it clear he didn't believe him. He reached a hand out and pulled Peter up in one smooth movement. "You good?"

Peter coughed, rubbing his chest in a circular motion, now back in control of his basic bodily functions. "Yeah, I'm...I'm good."

Bucky had already stepped back into a fighting stance and Peter mirrored it loosely.

In a flash, Bucky moved, and they were exchanging blows again, moving across the gym floor with speed.

"You still haven't told him, have you?" Bucky said suddenly in the middle of flipping Peter off of his back.

Peter landed in a crouch and then stood. "I don't know what you mean." He just about ducked out of the way as Bucky's metal fist swung towards his head. Right, yeah, no standing still in the middle of sparring.

“Just tell him already.”

Peter sidestepped an advance and Bucky grunted.

“I will, I will.” But it sounded half-hearted even to Peter.

Before he could even catch his breath, his legs were swept out from under him again.

“Ughhhh,” Peter groaned, rolling to his side so the sound muffled into the mat.

Bucky sank to one knee next to him and waited until Peter opened at least one eye to speak.

“He won’t care.”

Peter propped himself on one arm, the other hand rubbing at a particularly sore point on his neck.

“I think you underestimate just how important it is to him.”

Bucky rolled his eyes. “And you underestimate just how important you are to him.”

“Did Morgan make you watch My Little Pony with her again?”

Bucky shoved him back down onto the mat.

“Ughhh.”

“If you don’t get me down at least once in the next half hour, I’ll tell him myself.” Bucky straightened up and started to move away.

“Wait, no,” Peter scrambled to his feet and after him. “Play fair, dude!”

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It had been a solid two weeks of him dodging Tony, which, considering that he usually spent a few nights a week at the Tower, was nothing short of miraculous.

Nova was asleep on his chest as he onehandedly read his battered copy of ‘Great Expectations’ for English class. He was going to go out on patrol later – a late afternoon start given it was a Sunday and his curfew was tighter. So he had to get it done now. Having a warm six-month-old snoozing on your chest wasn’t all that conducive to alertness and he was struggling to keep his eyes open. A giggle rang through from the bathroom – May was hosing down Alfie after he had played in his team soccer match earlier. By the looks of him, it seemed more likely that he’d just laid about in the mud.

The doorbell rang and he glanced down at Nova. Little puffs of breath pushed out of her tiny, plump lips at a steady rate onto his collarbone, the noise thankfully not disturbing her slumber.

“Peter, can you? I’m not quite done here.” May’s voice echoed from the bathroom.

“Yep, I got it,” Peter called as loudly as he dared.

Nova remained asleep on his shoulder as he made it to the door, easing it open with one hand. Pepper, Morgan and Happy on the other side.

Peter’s brow wrinkled. “Oh, hey guys, I didn’t know you were coming.”

Morgan squeezed his legs before running off to no doubt find Alfie.

“May must have forgotten to mention it,” Pepper said, stepping in and easing Nova off of Peter’s shoulder in a smooth motion— Pepper Stark, baby stealer extraordinaire—

her face plastered with adoration as she did.

Peter was all but speechless as she glided past him and into the apartment. Happy stepped in next, reaching up and pulling Peter's coat off of the hook. He shoved it into his hands whilst at the same time shoving Peter out of the door.

Happy gave him something close to a smug grin. "He's waiting downstairs for you."

The door closed, leaving Peter standing in the hallway clutching his coat. What on earth just happened?

His watch beeped — "*Get a move on, kiddo*" — flashed up on the screen.

Well, no chance of avoidance now. Peter took a breath and headed downstairs.

As he came out of the apartment complex, Tony was stood right there, leant against the car that they'd built together. It was an Audi (obviously) but they'd built most of it together from parts, custom features. It had been his 17th birthday present; and it had been the best one he had ever had. Spending the time with Tony more than anything else.

Peter's stomach flipped. When they'd first started building it, Tony had talked about how important it would be to have a car when Peter went to Boston next year. How he could come back and forth easily to visit May and the kids and all the Starks. How much easier it would be. But it wasn't that simple.

Tony mistook Peter's unease and moved towards where he had stopped a foot away.

"I know, I know, you weren't sure about learning in this car, but I promise it will be fine. And if it gets a little dent, we can fix it up, no problem."

Tony threw the keys and he caught them on instinct.

"Come on." Tony climbed into the passenger seat before he could even say a word.

Peter ambled over and slid in at the driver's side, which felt weird in and of itself.

Tony was already buckled up. He should try to shut this down now. He looked over at Tony.

“Look, you don’t have to do this...”

Tony quirked a smile at him. “I know.”

“Like seriously, I don’t think it’s a good idea.”

“It will be fine.”

“It’s not like I need to drive in the city. I’ve got my webs. I’m pretty quick too - almost beat Bucky that last race—”

“—pretty sure if you start running around New York at speed that will nix your whole secret identity schtick.”

Peter ignored Tony’s quip.

“—besides Happy will take me places if I need to. I think I’ve grown on him now.”

“Stop being a scaredy-cat.”

That stopped him in his tracks. Tony thought he was scared of driving? Wow, that was so far from the truth.

“I’m not scared.”

Tony shook his head at him. “Yeah, sure.”

“I’m not.”

“Been to space, scared of parallel parking.”

“Ton-y.”

“Pete-r.”

“Mr Stark!”

“Underoos.”

Peter let out a huff of breath, his patience gone.

“Dad!”

Tony faltered then, his eyes softening and a hand curling into the hair at the back of Peter’s neck. Peter blew out a long breath, letting the warmth of his hand calm him. Tony spoke after a beat.

“Do you trust me?”

“No,” Peter said with a pout Morgan would’ve been proud of.

“Pete...”

Peter groaned. “Always.”

Tony settled back in his seat, satisfied. “So, mirror, signal, manoeuvre.”



Peter wasn't ready to back down. He tried another stance.

"You know MJ has some pretty shocking facts about the effects of driving and pollution."

"Come on, kid, this car is fully electric. You aren't even trying, now," Tony laughed. But it didn't warm Peter's chest like it normally would've.

"I know you've been putting this off. I'm not sure why." Tony tried to hold his eyes but Peter looked away. "Driving is a life skill, above all, it's just practical. Mainly for us adults to get a rest so you can drive Morgan, Alfie and Nova around while we drink afternoon cocktails."

Peter raised an eyebrow at him. "You'd trust them in a car with me."

"Eventually," Tony said with a shrug. "Hell, we let you swing them around in your webs."

"Only in the house!" Peter protested. "Not in a death trap like this."

Tony's brow crinkled; his voice dropped low. "Is that what this is about? You're worried about being in a crash?"

"What? No. No more than usual. That's not it."

"But there is something isn't there?" Tony paused, looking at him thoughtfully. Peter inspected the steering wheel like he hadn't installed it himself. "So if it's not driving, are you gonna tell me what's going on?"

"Nothing is going on, Tony." Peter tried to sound as bored at the suggestion as possible.

"You're avoiding me. And not doing a great job at hiding the fact that you are."

"I am...I am not avoiding you." When did he become such a liar – oh yeah, last year— but judging by the look on Tony's face still not a capable one.

“Come on, Pete,” Tony said wearily.

“I’m not. Everything is fine.”

There was a pause. The only sound the passing traffic.

“Forgive me if I don’t believe you. Last time you said that I found out later that you were being beaten to a pulp on the regular.”

He felt his cheeks flush with heat. Tony was throwing *that* in his face? He pushed himself away from Tony and against the door. “That’s...that’s not fair.”

“No, you’re right. I shouldn’t have said that,” Tony said quickly, rubbing Peter’s arm. He looked visibly upset. “But my fear still stands.”

Peter needed to tell him. He couldn’t leave Tony thinking those kinds of thoughts. He’d been pretty cut up about everything with Kevin.

“I wouldn’t keep that kind of secret, not again.” Peter’s fingers traced a line along the leather of the door interior. “Not that it’s ever going to happen again unless Happy has a temper that I don’t know about.”

May’s unexpected relationship with Happy was very new, weird, but not entirely unwanted, not by him.

“Happy would never lay a finger on you; any of you.” Tony’s eyes flashed dangerously. “If he did, he’d have me and the rest of the Avengers to answer to.”

“Yeah ok, I get it. Big protective boyband.”

Tony flicked him on the arm.

“Ow,” Peter rolled his eyes whilst simultaneously rubbing his arm. Tony waited for him to make eye contact again before he spoke

“There is no problem that can’t be fixed together.”

But Tony didn’t understand. You couldn’t fix someone’s deep disappointment in you. That would forever be there; a big stain. Peter looked over at Tony, the faint scars snaking down his neck a reminder of the big shoes he had to fill; that he never would. Tony would regret ever adopting him when he told him. They’d joked about it for years. Hell, he had all the paraphernalia – hoodies, t-shirts, even underwear for Christ’s sake. When he found out, it would crush him.

Tony had been there for him at his darkest hour, even when he had pushed him away. He didn’t want to let him down.

Peter’s gaze stayed on Tony though – seeing the deep worry behind his eyes. Fuck. He’d have to tell him. He couldn’t leave him like that. And it wasn’t like Tony would never find out. Him delaying it was stupid really.

“Nothing is wrong,” Peter straightened his back. “It’s actually about a decision that I have come to.”

“Ok.” Tony’s voice was less worried but still cautious.

“I’ve decided. I’m going to go to Columbia.” His voice came out far stronger than he thought it would. Peter looked just off to the side before he carried on. “It’s a really great school and I can be nearby you and May and the kids and still Spider-man – and really help people. And there are still some MIT credits I can take online...”

“Pete, take a breath.” Tony’s hand was a warm weight on his shoulder.

Peter did as he was told, before daring a look in Tony’s direction. There was an unreadable expression on his face. That was it, he’d done it. Totally disappointed him. Maybe he regretted even adopting him. He felt his face start to heat further as he averted his eyes now to anywhere but Tony. Warm fingers curled around the back of his neck.

“Oh Roo, you’ve been twisting yourself in circles about this.” Tony’s voice was full of warm

concern.

“I knew you’d be...I knew you’d...” Peter paused. He looked up at Tony who was just watching him. He knew Tony would be disappointed but right now... right now he seemed... relaxed. At ease. If he didn't know any better, Tony seemed actually okay with it. “Why aren’t you more upset about this?”

Tony barked out a short laugh, the skin around the edges of his eyes crinkling as he did.

“Kid, the second you turned down MIT, the Dean was on the blower to me.”

“What?!”

Tony *knew* . This whole time, he had already known. All his dodging and worrying and Tony had known all along. Of course he had, he’s Tony Stark. Good job he wasn’t going to MIT because he was a total idiot.

Peter let his head thunk against the steering wheel with a low groan. He heard Tony’s chuckle from next to him.

“It may be news, but I’m an Alumni and fairly well known to some, you know.”

“Please don’t call yourself the saviour of the world again,” Peter said without opening his eyes.

“Ha! Well, if the shoe fits.”

Peter groaned again. Tony patted his shoulder.

“Anyway, the Dean wanted to know why Tony Stark’s son wasn’t attending MIT in the fall.” Tony shrugged. “Probably worried I might send my annual donation somewhere else.”

He didn’t know what to say to all that. Too busy feeling like a total idiot.

“You know, we could’ve avoided this whole dance if you’d just come and told me. I was waiting – got all my merchandise already.” He reached into the glove box and pulled out a miniature light blue flag with ‘*Columbia*’ emblazoned on it. Of course he did.

Tony gave the flag a little wave: a wry smile on his face.

“Why didn’t *you* say anything?”

“I didn’t realise it was such a big deal. Columbia is a top tier school.”

“Yeah, but we talked about MIT all the time. That’s your school... you want me to go there.”

A slight hesitation. At least he wasn’t completely off his rocker on that front.

“I’m not gonna lie, I would have loved that.” Tony tilted his head. “But I want you to go where you want to go. Where you will be happy and thrive. That’s most important to me, bud.”

“Huh.” Peter looked away from Tony’s earnest expression. “Right.”

“I do just want to check one thing.” Tony moved so his body was angled more in Peter’s direction. “Is Columbia what you really want? Because I’m pretty sure MIT wasn’t pure projection on my part. If you are staying in New York because you feel like you need to stay to protect May and the kids, if it’s out of some sort of...fear... then I’m not sure I’m happy about that.”

Peter went to respond a definitive ‘no’ but then he stopped. Was it because of fear?

Tony read his pause as affirmation, his hand wrapping around Peter’s forearm.

“We’ll take care of them.” His expression deeply serious now. “We’re all family now.”

Peter couldn't help but smile at him. They were, weren't they? So much had happened and this bond, this patchwork family, had been the best of it. Was he scared of leaving them? Maybe a little.

"I know you will... you would. It's not that," Peter sighed, trying to find the words. "In the last few years – well for me anyway – you know I, well, I died."

Tony's face suddenly scrunched and Peter grabbed his hand and squeezed it.

"Sorry, but well yeah, I did and then there was the battle, and I almost lost you..." Peter didn't want to think about those early months of Tony's recovery but he wouldn't ever forget it.

He felt Tony's hand squeeze back.

"Then there was the whole Kevin thing, which, you know, sucked."

"I thought therapy was meant to stop you downplaying that stuff."

Peter's eyes flicked to Tony. He might have meant that to come out more jokingly but his tone didn't match. Tony carried what Kevin did almost as his own cross to bear. Jan the Therapist had even joked that maybe he and Peter were drawn to each other with their similar overactive guilt complexes. She might have a point.

Peter decided to just sidestep that comment.

"What I'm trying to say is that all of that made me realise what was important. I want to be close to you all... at least for a little bit longer. I... I really like my life right now."

He had family, friends, Spider-man, school. It felt good, balanced. He was happy.

A broad grin spread across Tony's face. "I'm really glad to hear that."

Peter smiled back.

“Just promise me, if things change after the first year, if you’re ready to spread your webs further, then you’ll talk to me. You could transfer to MIT – *if* you wanted then.”

That sounded like a good compromise. He hadn’t considered potentially transferring at a later date.

“Yeah, that’s actually a really good idea.”

“You make it sound like I never have any good ideas.”

“Well...”

Tony pointed two fingers at himself. “Certified genius.”

“Do we call someone who let the kids have candy at 7pm a certified genius these days?”

Tony grinned. “You said you’d take that to the grave.”

Peter put his arms up in an over-exaggerated shrug which had Tony playfully rolling his eyes.

“Right enough chatting, more driving.”

Peter looked at the wheel. “Ok, well, if you’re sure. Mirror, signal, manoeuvre, right?”

Tony gave his arm a final squeeze before settling back into his seat.

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Peter put his belt on, flicked the indicator on and slowly moved the car onto the road. He turned his head to smile at Tony as they stopped at a red light.

“Thanks for this, Dad.” Tony’s face softened as he patted Peter on the arm. “And don’t worry, I

only trashed Flash's car that one time.”

“Wait, what?”

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## End Notes

Thank you to everyone who read this and of course if you are reading this then A Peter Parker Problem too. It is so very appreciated.

Special thank you to whomever nominated it for 'Best Plot Twist' for this years Irondad Creator Awards- I'll be honest, I didn't really think it had one per se - maybe just small twisty moments. I'm very thankful though! Thanks for those who nominated 'Missing Links' too - I'm one lucky lady.

Don't forget to get your nominations in for the many different categories by 27th February if you want to let the creators out there know that you appreciate their works. I can't do hyperlinks to save my life so you will have to cut and paste like an old person ☹️:  
<https://irondad-creator-awards.tumblr.com/post/667398621171417088/irondad-creator-awards-2022-information-post>

Thank you to Penguinmediamogul, Niniblack and MsHermia for betaing this for me and putting up with my 'But I don't know how to write a one-shot' moments. They are saints.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!